

CLAIMS

1. A seat latch for controlling operation of a vehicle seat within a vehicle, the vehicle seat having a seat base and a selectively positionable seat back pivotally coupled to the seat base,  
5 the seat latch comprising:
  - a frame connectable to one of the vehicle seat and the vehicle; and
  - a user-manipulatable control supported by the frame, the user-manipulatable control operable to facilitate movement of the seat latch between a latched condition in which at least part of the vehicle seat is secured against movement with respect to the vehicle and an  
10 unlatched condition in which the at least part of the vehicle seat is movable with respect to the vehicle;
  - the user-manipulatable control also operable to facilitate movement of the seat back between a plurality of reclined positions;
  - the user-manipulatable control retained in at least one position when the seat is in the  
15 unlatched condition and in which the user-manipulatable control provides a visual indication that the seat latch is not in the latched condition.
2. The seat latch as claimed in claim 1, wherein the user-manipulatable control is movable along a first path to release the seat latch from the latched condition to the unlatched  
20 condition, and along a second path enabling the seat back to be reclined but not releasing the seat latch from the latched condition to the unlatched condition.
3. The seat latch as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a ratchet coupled to the user-manipulatable control and selectively engagable with a striker, the striker connectable to the  
25 other of the vehicle seat and the vehicle.
4. The seat latch as claimed in claim 3, wherein:
  - the ratchet is releasably engaged with the striker in the latched condition to prevent substantial movement of the ratchet relative to the striker; and
  - 30 the ratchet is disengagable from the striker in the unlatched condition to facilitate movement of the striker relative to the ratchet.

5. The seat latch as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a biasing member coupled to the user-manipulatable control, the user-manipulatable control movable between a first position and a second position, the user-manipulatable control movable toward the second position to place the seat latch in the unlatched condition, the user-manipulatable control  
5 biased toward the second position when the seat latch is in the unlatched condition.

6. The seat latch as claimed in claim 1, wherein the user-manipulatable control is movable from a first position to a second position to place the seat latch in the unlatched condition, the user-manipulatable control biased toward the second position when the seat  
10 latch is in the unlatched condition, the user-manipulatable control movable from the first position to a third position permitting the seat back to be reclined to different positions but not generating release of the seat latch from the latched condition, the user-manipulatable control biased toward the first position when moved toward the third position.

15 7. The seat latch as claimed in claim 1, wherein the user-manipulatable control has at least one surface substantially hidden from view when the seat latch is in the latched condition and providing a visible indicator when the seat latch is in the unlatched condition.

8. The seat latch as claimed in claim 7, wherein the user-manipulatable control includes a  
20 brightly colored surface visible only when the seat latch is in the unlatched condition.

9. A seat latch having a reclining condition, a latched condition and an unlatched condition, the seat latch comprising:  
a housing;  
25 a user-manipulatable control received at least partially within the housing, movable along a first path to move the seat latch from the latched condition to the unlatched condition, and movable along a second path to move the seat latch into and out of the reclining condition but retaining the seat latch in the latched condition, the user-manipulatable control protruding outside of the housing when the latch is in the unlatched condition and not protruding beyond  
30 the housing when the latch is in the latched condition.

10. The seat latch as claimed in claim 9, wherein the user-manipulatable control includes at least one surface visible when the user-manipulatable control protrudes from the housing and recessed within the housing when the user-manipulatable control does not protrude from the housing.

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11. The seat latch as claimed in claim 10, wherein the at least one surface is brightly colored to provide a visual indicator that the seat latch is in the unlatched condition.

12. The actuation device as claimed in claim 9, wherein the user-manipulatable control is  
10 biased into a position protruding from the housing when the latch is in the unlatched condition and is not biased into the position protruding from the housing when the latch is in the latched condition.

13. A seat latch for a vehicle seat within a vehicle, the seat latch comprising:  
15 a frame connectable to one of the vehicle seat and the vehicle;  
a striker connectable to the other of the vehicle seat and the vehicle;  
a ratchet coupled to the frame and selectively engagable with the striker to selectively secure the frame to the striker;  
a user-manipulatable control coupled to the ratchet and movable from a first position  
20 to a second position to facilitate reclining of the vehicle seat, and from the first position to a third position to facilitate disengagement of the frame from the striker; and  
a biasing member coupled to the user-manipulatable control and biasing the user-manipulatable control toward the first position when the user-manipulatable control is in the second position, the biasing member not biasing the user-manipulatable control toward the  
25 first position when the user-manipulatable control is in the third position.

14. The seat latch as claimed in claim 13, wherein:  
the frame includes a housing within which the user-manipulatable control is at least partially received; and  
30 the user-manipulatable control protrudes from the housing when the user-manipulatable control is in the third position.

15. The seat latch as claimed in claim 14, wherein the user-manipulatable control does not protrude from the housing when the user-manipulatable control is in the first position.
- 5 16. The seat latch as claimed in claim 13, further comprising a pawl releasably engaged with the ratchet to retain the ratchet in a latched position capturing the striker, the biasing member coupled between the pawl and the user-manipulatable control.
- 10 17. The seat latch as claimed in claim 16, wherein movement of the user-manipulatable control from the first position to the third position rotates the pawl and releases the ratchet to an unlatched position to allow disengagement between the striker and the ratchet, the ratchet preventing rotation of the pawl and maintaining the user-manipulatable control in the third position when the ratchet is in the unlatched position.
- 15 18. The seat latch as claimed in claim 16, wherein movement of the user-manipulatable control from the third position to the first position after disengagement of the striker and the ratchet extends the biasing member to bias the user-manipulatable control toward the third position.
- 20 19. The seat latch as claimed in claim 18, wherein re-engagement of the striker and the ratchet rotates the ratchet to facilitate rotation of the pawl and movement of the user-manipulatable control from the third position toward the first position.
20. A method of moving a seat within a vehicle, comprising:
- 25       actuating a user-manipulatable control in a first manner to release a latch from a striker and to enable movement of the vehicle seat with respect to the vehicle, the latch providing a visual indicator to a user that the latch is in an unlatched condition when the latch is released from the striker;
- capturing the striker with the latch; and
- 30       actuating the user-manipulatable control in a second manner different from the first manner to recline the seat.

21. The method as claimed in claim 20, wherein:

the first manner of actuating the user-manipulatable control is one of pushing and pulling the user-manipulatable control; and

5 the second manner of actuating the user-manipulatable control is another of pushing and pulling the user-manipulatable control.

22. The method as claimed in claim 20, wherein:

10 the first manner of actuating the user-manipulatable control is one of depressing and lifting the user-manipulatable control; and

the second manner of actuating the user-manipulatable control is another of depressing and lifting the user-manipulatable control.